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BALANCED PRODUCTION IN INDIANA AIDED  
BY PLANNED USE OF RETIRED LAND

A radio talk by LeRoy Hoffman, Assistant County Agent, Lafayette, Indiana, delivered in the Land Grant College Program of the National Farm and Home Hour, March 21, 1934.

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80,000 corn and hog reduction contracts have been signed by farmers in Indiana. Just what this will mean in the way of reduced corn acreage cannot be stated exactly until all these contracts have been tabulated and adjusted. Indiana normally raises an average of 4,500,000 acres of corn. Preliminary figures show that about 80 percent of the corn acreage will be under contract. With a reduction of 20 percent for 1934, this will mean that there will be approximately 720,000 acres removed from the production of corn which can only be used as provided for in the rules and regulations of the corn and hog contract.

While corn and hog production in Indiana cannot be separated from that of the rest of the country, there are some definite figures on Indiana's production and consumption of corn that show the necessity for this reduction program. Comparing the census figures of 1910 with those of 1930, we find that there are 456,000 less horses on our Indiana farms. Farm Management studies show that it takes an average acre of corn to feed a work horse for one year, so we can assume that we have 456,000 acres that was once used to grow corn for horses on which the corn has now been diverted to other uses. Indiana has also contributed its share to the exports of pork products that were formerly sent to Europe. With these exports, especially those of lard, reduced so drastically, and with our declining horse population, we have continued to grow as many acres of corn as we did twenty years ago, and in fact, during the last two years have increased our acreage over what it was in 1910.

The problem that is now confronting farmers who have signed a corn and hog contract is what they will do with their contracted acres. The contract provides that these may be sown to additional pasture, soil-improvement crops or may be allowed to lie idle or fallow. Every farmer will have to make a decision as to which of these things he will do with his contracted acres. For years, the Agricultural Colleges and the Extension Service have advised farmers to put more of their land in legumes for hay, pasture, and soil-improvement. While many farmers have followed such a program, many others have not done so, not always as a matter of choice, but because they did not see their way clear or did not have the money to buy limestone to sweeten acid soils and buy legume seed. The Adjustment Program offers these farmers an opportunity to sow more acres to legume crops and receive benefit payments for doing so. From the statements made and questions asked by farmers, we are lead to believe that they are planning on putting thousands of acres of this contracted land in alfalfa for hay in 1935. Thousands of acres will be sown to clovers and grasses which can be pastured if now sown with a nurse crop and for which there is a great need.

During the past one hundred years Indiana has been transformed from a land of timber and prairies to a land of cultivated farms. Crop yields have been maintained by bringing into production new lands from time to time.

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At present there is little new land that can be brought into production and much of the land, especially in the rougher part of the State, has had its fertility depleted to a point that it has become unprofitable and has been abandoned for crop use. If Indiana is to continue in years to come to produce its share of the nation's food, the fertility of our better lands at least must be maintained. The exact figures on our legume land is in legume crops. If a definite rotation were followed on all the land under cultivation and it was farmed as one big farm, it would mean that only once in ten years would the average field be in a legume crop. Data from our experimental fields show that a legume crop must be in the rotation at least once in every three or four years if crop yields are to be maintained. Farm Management studies of over 700 farms show that those farms with a high percentage of crop land in legumes make the largest labor income. With 10,000,000 acres under cultivation and only a 1,000,000 acres in legumes, we still need to increase our legume crop by a 1,500,000 acres if we are to maintain the fertility of Indiana soils. The Agricultural Adjustment Program offers an opportunity through which farmers can profitably increase their acreage of legumes and pasture and at the same time adjust their crop and livestock production to consumptive demands.

The benefits that would be derived from putting more of our land in legumes and balancing our crop production would be worth all the effort that is being made, to say nothing about the other benefits to be gained from the Agricultural Adjustment Program.